

# **A Guide for the Development of a**

---

# **Districtwide School Safety Plan**

**November 2001**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

---

DIVISION OF STUDENT SERVICES \* OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

PTM No.1502-77

---

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>COMMISSIONER’S STATEMENT</b> .....	i
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
Purpose of the Guide .....	1
How to Use the Guide .....	4
<b>PART ONE: FEDERAL AND STATE CONTEXT</b>	
<b>PART TWO: DISTRICTIWIWE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN</b>	
School District Safety Planning Committee .....	12
School District Policies and Procedures .....	15
Codes of Student Conduct .....	16
Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools .....	17
School Security .....	18
Needs Assessment of the School Building and Incidents .....	19
School Security Measures .....	20
School District Curriculum .....	21
Core Curriculum Content Standards .....	21
Life Skills .....	22
Character Education .....	22
Prevention Programs and Services .....	23
Staff Development .....	23
Student Programs .....	24
Community Outreach and Education .....	25
Intervention Programs and Services .....	26
Early Warning Signs .....	26
Imminent Warning Signs .....	30
Intervention and Referral Services .....	32
School-Community Linkages .....	33
<b>PART THREE: SCHOOL BUILDING EMERGENCY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING</b>	
Process for Developing an Emergency and Crisis Management Plan .....	37
Forming a Planning Committee .....	38
Collaboration and Community Agency Networking .....	40
Elements of an Emergency and Crisis Management Plan .....	40
Training and Development .....	41
Communicating with the Print and Broadcast Media .....	42

---

## **PART FOUR: CRISIS RESPONSE TO A VIOLENT EVENT**

Role of the Principal .....	44
Role of District Administration .....	45
Role of County and Local Officials, Agencies and Organizations .....	45
Postvention in the Aftermath of an Emergency or Crisis .....	46
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	49
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	50
<b>APPENDIX A: Resources: Local, County, State and National</b> .....	51
<b>APPENDIX B: Agency Descriptions: Working with Community Resources</b> ....	61

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Office of Educational Support Services would like to extend their appreciation for the assistance provided by Attorney General’s Education Law Enforcement Working Group in reviewing the Guide for the Development of a Districtwide School Safety Plan. In addition, the following staff members were involved in the development of this document: Catherine M. Crill, Manager, Dr. Philip Brown, Manager, Gary Vermeire, Coordinator, Haydee Y. Perez, Educational Program Development Specialist, Sharon Hoffman, Education Planner.

### **FUNDING SOURCE**

Funds for the development of this guide were provided in full by a grant from the United States Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, under Title IV: The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994.

### **REPRODUCTION OF MATERIALS**

Schools may use, adapt or reproduce all of the materials in the Guide as appropriate.

### **DISCLAIMER**

*The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) does not control or assure the significance, accuracy, appropriateness or comprehensiveness of the resource information cited in the Guide. References to resource information in this document are not intended to support any views expressed or products and services offered, nor suggest their importance. The resources identified in the Appendices are intended to provide schools and communities with links to relevant information for planning, implementing and evaluating comprehensive school safety programs. Schools are encouraged to thoroughly assess their needs and investigate programs before adopting them.*

---

## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

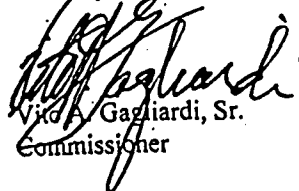
Incidents of violence and terror in our country have instilled fear in the hearts and minds of all citizens. Parents struggle to explain tragic events to their children, calm their fears and work to ensure that they go off to school each morning to a safe environment. The vast majority of New Jersey schools can provide the assurance that they are safe and drug-free. New Jersey educators have responded positively and aggressively to the need for developing local solutions to address the issues of violence, school safety, and crisis management. They have enhanced their ability to intervene early when students are disruptive or victimized through innovative support programs such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, and intervention and referral services.

While the trend toward decreased reports of incidents is encouraging and effective school responses to the problems are increasing, the problems of youth violence and substance abuse remain significant concerns. Various types of school violence can be viewed as a continuum. At one end of the continuum is the bullying or shoving-match behavior between fellow students that must be curtailed before it escalates into something more serious. At the other end of the continuum are the past acts of extreme violence across the county, which have received significant media attention.

The programmatic response of each school district and the state must also follow a continuum. It should address prevention efforts that include the following: an assessment of the school community; the development of clearly defined student behavior policies and codes of student conduct; the development of an emergency operations plan, with clearly defined policies and procedures; a plan to address a crisis; and a plan for effective use of available community resources, including law enforcement personnel.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to supporting the development of safe and drug-free schools. NJDOE will also continue to work with every New Jersey school to ensure a seamless school-community program of prevention, identification and intervention for violence and substances. But achieving this goal of safe, disciplined and drug-free schools is not solely a school or state responsibility; it is a community responsibility. NJDOE provides this guide to assist local districts in developing a districtwide school safety plan and will continue to explore other practices that will further strengthen the direction and guidance we can provide to educators.

Sincerely,



Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr.  
Commissioner

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of A Guide for the Development of a Districtwide School Safety Plan is to provide New Jersey schools with background information for addressing school safety in a comprehensive manner. The Guide has been developed in support of the Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey established by the State Board of Education. Specifically, preparation of the Guide fulfills Goal #5, Objective #3 of the Strategic Plan, which calls for the Department of Education to *"develop a resource guide designed to foster safe, disciplined learning environments in New Jersey public schools..."*

The Guide is intended to provide schools with a general framework for planning and an inventory of supportive resources for the development of comprehensive school safety plans and programs designed to effect positive behavior in schools in order to ensure a safe school climate. It describes a continuum of strategies and activities that are key to establishing safe and secure educational environments, ranging from the physical makeup of school buildings, to prevention and intervention programs and services, to community involvement, to responding to the aftermath of a crisis. **However, in the wake of the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, schools may wish to expand upon these school safety guidelines, which are intended to address internal factors only, such as school climate. Policies regarding safety and security on school buses, as well as evacuation procedures should be revisited.**

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) recognizes the importance of providing a safe school environment that is conducive to learning. A renewed

emphasis on providing a safe school environment has begun in many school districts and is highlighted in the *Abbott v. Burke* decision which mandates Abbott districts to “...implement a Department approved districtwide security plan...” pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:24-1.4(i). The NJDOE believes that the implementation of a school safety plan should not be limited to Abbott Districts and encourages all schools to assess the impact an effective comprehensive school safety plan could have on their efforts to provide a safe school environment that is conducive to learning and which positively effects student performance. In order to assure the safety of all students, districts should consider establishing two levels of planning in order to develop and implement safety and crisis management plans.

Two levels of planning:

- 1. *School District Safety Plan*** – This districtwide plan focuses on the overall school district safety plan and should take a comprehensive approach including policy development and program implementation.

The districtwide plan should address:

- ✓ School District Policies and Procedures (e.g., codes of student conduct);
- ✓ Physical Makeup of School Buildings in the District (e.g., needs assessment and school security issues);
- ✓ School District Curriculum (e.g., Core Curriculum Content Standards, character education, life skills-based curriculum);
- ✓ School District Prevention Programs and Services (e.g., staff development, student programs, community education and outreach); and
- ✓ School District Intervention Programs and Services (e.g., early warning signs and imminent warning signs, intervention and referral services, a coordinated system of intervention, school-community linkages).

2. *Emergency and Crisis Management Plan* – This plan focuses on assuring that the school-community is fully organized and equipped to respond during a sudden loss event or other tragedy. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2, Emergency and Crisis Management Plans, “Each local board of education shall establish plans, procedures and mechanisms for responding to emergencies and crises. The plan should consider defining roles of district and building staff, establishing parameters for memorials, coordinating with communications media, community agency networking, crisis response teams, training and development, guidelines for working with communications media, and establishing guidelines for parent outreach. The plan, at a minimum, shall provide for:

- ✓ The protection of the health, safety and welfare of the school population; and
- ✓ Supportive services for staff, students and their families.”



# How to Use The Guide

Since the context and condition in which school violence and other sudden violent loss events occur differ from school to school, it is not possible to provide a “one size fits all” approach that applies to all schools. Therefore, the Guide has been designed to provide brief descriptions of pertinent school safety issues and identify a broad range of resources for consideration.

The information in the Guide centers on four major themes: planning, prevention and intervention programs, crisis response, and community coordination. The Guide is organized according to four major sections, which are described below:

## ***FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY CONTEXT***

This section contains a brief description of federal and state statutes and regulations and state policy guidelines related to school safety.

## ***DISTRICTWIDE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN***

This section features information on the range of policies, programs, services and school safety activities and security strategies that should be in place aimed at preventing school violence from occurring, and for intervening with potential school violence at early stages of identification.

## ***SCHOOL BUILDING EMERGENCY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN***

This section focuses on the importance of proactive planning and preparation for a crisis. Included is a description of the components of a comprehensive emergency and crisis plan and other essential elements for assuring that the school-community is fully organized and equipped to respond during a sudden violent loss event or other tragedy.

## ***CRISIS RESPONSE TO A VIOLENT EVENT***

This section provides information for schools to consider in responding after a tragedy, as well as the grief of members of the school-community who are the survivors of a tragedy.

# **PART ONE**

## **FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY CONTEXT**

# FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY CONTEXT

School safety programs should be planned and developed in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and policy guidelines. A synopsis of relevant policy information is described below. Further information may be obtained by accessing *administrative code* on the NJDOE website, [www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education).

## ➤ **Safe Schools Initiative**

The July 1994 publication titled Safe Schools Initiative: Creating a Safe, Disciplined School Environment Conducive to Learning sets forth the New Jersey State Board of Education's policy on school safety. The document describes a variety of strategies for addressing the problem of disruption and violence, including the establishment of local student codes of conduct; the promulgation of regulations for the possession and use of weapons; the development of guidelines for alternative education programs; the promulgation of regulations protecting access to information on juvenile justice proceedings; and support for neighborhood community services centers. The publication also describes past violence prevention and intervention initiatives of the Department of Education and provides a summary of the recommendations of the Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force.

## ➤ **Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act**

The federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (20 U.S.C. 7101) program was established to help school districts meet the Goal 7 of the National Education Goals: *All schools in the United States will be free of drugs, violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.* Under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) program, the New Jersey Department of Education distributes the allocated federal

funds to school districts, based upon a per pupil formula. The districts use the funds to implement research-based and comprehensive substance abuse and violence prevention and intervention programs. SDFSCA is the federal government's largest single source of funding for school drug and violence prevention programs. In addition to direct entitlement awards, SDFSCA funds are used to provide various competitive grants to districts and community-based entities.

➤ **Law Enforcement Operations for Substances, Weapons and Safety**

The rules at N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-6 explain the requirements for the adoption of policies and procedures to ensure cooperation between school staff and law enforcement authorities in all matters relating to the unlawful possession, distribution and disposition of controlled dangerous substances, as defined in N.J.S.A. 24:21-2, including anabolic steroids, drug paraphernalia, alcoholic beverages, firearms, as defined in N.J.S.A. 2C: 39-1f, and other deadly weapons, as defined in N.J.S.A. 2C: 39-1r. The regulations also include direction for the conduct of law enforcement activities and operations occurring on school property, including arrest procedures and undercover school operations.

➤ **Uniform Statewide Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials**

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-6, schools are required to adopt policies and procedures for law enforcement operations that include a *memorandum of understanding* between education and law enforcement officials. Per N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-6.2(b)12iii, the memorandum of understanding for law enforcement operations must be approved by the district board of education, the county superintendent and the county prosecutor. In accordance with the Attorney General's Executive Directive No. 1988-1, the memorandum must conform with the provisions and format of the Uniform Statewide Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials approved by the Department of Education and the Department of Law and Public Safety. The memorandum

establishes the reciprocal rights and obligations with respect to the possession, distribution and disposition of controlled dangerous substances, including anabolic steroids, drug paraphernalia, firearms and other deadly weapons; the planning and conduct of law enforcement activities and operations occurring on school property; and law enforcement participation in substance abuse prevention programs. Under N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6, schools are also required to establish an annual process for the chief school administrator and appropriate law enforcement officials to review the memorandum.

➤ **School Safety Regulations**

The regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5 establish requirements for school safety programs at the local district level. The provisions under the School Safety subchapter of the Programs to Support Student Development administrative code are described below:

*Code of Student Conduct*

The rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 establish requirements for the development, implementation and review of a code of student conduct for establishing school standards and rules that define acceptable student behavioral expectations and which govern student behavior.

*Emergency and Crisis Management Plans*

The regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2 contain requirements for the establishment of plans, procedures and mechanisms for responding to emergencies and crises.

*Incident Reporting of Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse*

The rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.3 set forth the reporting requirements for school employees who observe or have direct knowledge from a

participant or victim of an act of violence, as required under N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46, or the possession or distribution of substances, or who report a student for being under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. This subchapter of administrative code includes reporting requirements to the local school board of education and the Commissioner of Education. The data submitted to the Commissioner are used to provide the Education committees of the Senate and General Assembly with an annual report on the extent of the violence, vandalism and substance abuse problems and recommendations for alleviating the problems, as required under N.J.S.A. 18A:17-48.

#### *Access to Juvenile Justice Information*

The rule at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.4 obligates school boards to adopt and implement policies and procedures protecting access to information related to juvenile justice proceedings, according to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60.

#### *Firearms Offenses*

The provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7 through 12, the *Zero Tolerance for Guns Act*, and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.5 set forth required procedures and consequences for any student who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm on school property, on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function, and any student who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for committing a crime while in possession of a firearm on school property, on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function.

*Assaults with Weapons Offenses*

The provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.2 through 2.5 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.6 set forth required procedures and consequences for any student who commits an assault with a weapon upon a teacher, administrator, board member, other employee of a school board on any school property, on a school bus or at a school function.

*Assaults on District Board of Education Members or Employees*

The provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.1 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.7 set forth required procedures and consequences for any student who commits an assault, not involving the use of a weapon or firearm, upon a teacher, administrator, board member or other employee of a school board acting in the performance of his or her duties and in a situation where his or her authority to act is apparent, or as a result of the victim's relationship to a public institution.

*Remotely Activating Paging Devices*

The rule at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.8 establishes the requirement for adopting and implementing policies and procedures regarding the prohibition of remotely activating paging devices, according to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 2C:33-19.

➤ **Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect**

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10 establishes uniform Statewide policies and procedures for public school personnel to report allegations of child abuse and neglect to the Division of Youth and Family Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services, and to cooperate with the investigation of such allegations.

➤ **Intervention and Referral Services**

The regulations for Intervention and Referral Services (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7) provide the requirements for the establishment and implementation of a coordinated system, utilizing a multidisciplinary team approach, in each school building for the planning and delivery of intervention and referral services that are designed to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior or health difficulties, and to assist staff who have difficulties in addressing students' learning, behavior or health needs.

➤ **Alternative Education Programs**

Alternative education programs are designed to meet the special needs, interests and aspirations of at-risk students who may be disruptive and/or disaffected with the traditional educational environment. The regulations for alternative education programs (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8) set forth requirements for program approval and criteria for the operation of both high school and middle school programs and mandatory student placements. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8.3, school districts must provide placement in alternative education programs for students removed from general education for firearms offenses (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7 through 12 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.5) and students removed from general education for assault with weapons offenses (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.2 through 2.5 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.6).

➤ **Home or Out-of-School Instruction for General Education Students**

The regulations found at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-9 set forth the requirements for the provision of an appropriate program of home or other out-of-school instruction for general education students. The rules describe the circumstances for providing student placements and explain the service requirements.



## **PART TWO**

# **DISTRICTWIDE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN**

# DISTRICTWIDE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

The establishment and maintenance of safe schools involves more than secure physical plants and crisis response plans. A continuum of supportive prevention and intervention programs and services should be established to serve as the foundation of a seamless and comprehensive school safety program. According to Dwyer, Osher and Warger (1998), effective and safe schools require strong leadership, caring faculties, student participation, parent and community involvement, cooperative law enforcement officials and safe physical environments. School safety involves the adoption, consistent enforcement and periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of districtwide policies that support responsible behaviors and include violence prevention and education as a part of the K-12 curriculum.

Dwyer, et al. (1998) have reported that safe schools base their prevention and intervention programs upon careful assessment of student problems, utilize research-based prevention and intervention approaches, plan and implement programs in collaboration with appropriate community members and regularly evaluate programs to ensure they are meeting stated program objectives. Research studies consistently report that safe schools establish collaborative partnerships among students, teachers, administrators, parents and other community representatives (e.g., law enforcement, mental health, substance abuse, faith-based, youth services, business, medical and treatment, local government). These partnerships can assist the district in discipline problems in the school-community and aid in the collaborative review, development and implementation of effective strategies and programs for addressing the priority problems.

Consistent with the principles described above, the information in this section is intended to provide schools with a framework for planning and developing

comprehensive safety plans and programs designed to prevent conditions that contribute to violence, and for providing supportive interventions for students who exhibit early and imminent warning signs for potential to commit acts of violence.

### ***School District Safety Planning Committee***

One of the most effective ways to develop a comprehensive school district safety plan is through a cooperative effort. Schools districts should keep in mind all levels of planning and implementation when developing a districtwide school safety plan. School and community representatives involved in the collaborative effort should work together to develop, implement and maintain a comprehensive safety plan. To ensure effective collaboration and coordination in the development of a comprehensive plan, it is recommended that the district establish a *School District Safety Planning Committee (SDSPC)*. This committee should focus on overall school district expectations and performance, and set forth the overall school district safety plan. The subsections that follow provide information on this committee.

#### *The Role of the School District Safety Planning Committee*

It is important to first identify the role of the SDSPC in the comprehensive planning process, which helps to provide a framework for the development of the plan. The districtwide committee is responsible for planning all of the components of the district comprehensive safety plan and for assisting schools in the implementation of the plan. The committee helps the school district assess and plan appropriate measures for securing the physical plants, school policies and procedures, curriculum, prevention and intervention programs and services, crisis planning and crisis response. The SDSPC aids in the identification of appropriate resources and the development of relationships to fully implement the plan. The committee should also be responsible for assuring that the Emergency and Crisis Management Plan for each school building is consistent with the districtwide safety plan.

### *Organizing the School District Safety Planning Committee*

When a district begins to develop its SDSPC, it should seek representation that will adequately address all of the elements of a comprehensive safety plan. The district should include members who have an array of knowledge in planning, implementing and/or evaluating the various components of a district safety plan. A candidate's availability should also be taken into consideration when choosing members.

### *Community Members and the School District Safety Planning Committee*

According to Dwyer and Osher (2000), "safe and effective schools develop procedures for assessing and working with the external community so that programs and interventions are sensitive to community needs." Involving a broad range of community members and organizations is necessary to obtain support and buy-in to the comprehensive safety plan. Community leaders can be particularly effective in helping schools gain the involvement of parents and even, at times, students.

### *Building an Effective School District Safety Planning Committee*

Due to the complexity and controversial nature of safety issues, it is important to create a foundation of communication and trust. An effective committee is able and willing to develop the skills of its members using team-building and human relations techniques. It is important for the districtwide planning committee to reach consensus on a vision for school safety, as well as short and long-term goals and objectives, and members should be willing to commit to their achievement. It also is important for the districtwide committee to develop procedures for solving internal conflicts and addressing issues and concerns raised by external constituents.

### *Logistics for the School District Safety Planning Committee*

Once the committee has been created and established its vision, goals and objectives, it must address functional logistics and institute procedures for committee operations. Dwyer and Osher (2000) suggest that the districtwide committee should begin the

planning process by obtaining approval and buy-in, securing a planning budget, designing a communication process and scheduling meetings.

- Obtaining Approval and Buy-in

The effectiveness of the plan is directly related to the degree of investment in the plan by concerned and involved constituencies. Obtaining approval and buy-in from key administrators and community members lay the groundwork for the committee to establish cooperative relationships and secure supportive resources. Administrators and community members should be readily and regularly provided with information regarding the school's vision, goals and objectives of the plan to maintain a climate of involvement, and the committee should remain open to input from all facets of the school and community.

- Securing a Planning Budget

Securing a planning budget for anticipated committee functions and products is another logistical task for the SDSPC to consider. For example, funds may be necessary to cover release time for school staff to attend meetings. The committee should consider a variety of funding sources or in-kind resources to support committee activities, including the school budget, all of which may require the submission of formal proposals.

- Developing a Communication Process

The committee should develop a process for communicating relevant findings to the school and the community, as appropriate. Dwyer and Osher (2000) suggest a few ways to accomplish this: 1) Prepare and release an executive summary identifying all of the committee members, the purpose of the committee and the committee's recommendations; and 2) conduct face-to-face meetings with the school staff, the student body and/or community members. The communication process should include mechanisms or guidance for

soliciting feedback from school and community members to verify the relevance of the findings and obtain useful information for committee planning.

- Scheduling Meetings and Setting Timelines

The committee should establish a meeting schedule and set realistic timelines for the achievement of objectives. The committee may also consider the various phases of the plan and assign achievable benchmarks for success. For example, it may take a full year to develop the comprehensive school district safety plan before implementation begins, and evaluation of the plan may not commence until after components of the plan have been implemented for a school year.

### ***School District Policies and Procedures***

All things considered, schools are among the safest places for children and adolescents in New Jersey. Statistics indicate that students are more at risk of being victims of violence or for committing acts of violence outside the school than on school grounds. National events over the past few years, however, have demonstrated that no school is immune from violent incidents, and all schools should have in place proactive policies and plans for sudden loss events.

School district policies and procedures governing behavioral expectations and consequences for inappropriate behavior that are clearly written, broad-based, fair, firm and consistently enforced provide the framework for school safety. School policies and procedures are particularly important because they set a positive tone, impart behavioral norms and positive behavioral expectations, as well as establish limits and consequences for inappropriate student behavior.

All school administrators, school staff, students and their families should understand the rules and what happens when they are violated (Dwyer and Osher,

2000). School districts should establish the policy position that the illegal possession of weapons, alcohol, tobacco or other drugs is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Policies should clearly distinguish among a variety of disciplinary issues, infractions and consequences. There should be a balance between disciplinary responses and the application of prevention and intervention practices which take into consideration situational variables and student characteristics (e.g., mental health, culture, social and family dynamics, personality and developmental characteristics, disciplinary history).

In developing school district policies and procedures, administrators should review and incorporate the provisions of federal and state statutes, regulations and policy guidelines cited in the Introduction section. The documents described below can also provide guidance to schools for the development of policies and procedures:

- Codes of Student Conduct - The provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 establish the minimum requirements for student codes of conduct. The regulations include requirements for the codes of conduct to include, at a minimum, student responsibilities and rights; disciplinary sanctions and due process; and positive reinforcement for good conduct and academic success.

Additional guidance for the development of codes of student conduct is provided in the NJDOE publication titled Student Codes of Conduct: A Guide to Policy Review and Code Development. In addition to summarizing the legal framework for school discipline policies and procedures, the publication offers guidance to school districts in the following areas: the purpose of codes of conduct, the process for developing effective codes of conduct, components of district codes of

conduct, strategies for implementing codes of conduct and a list of supportive national and state resources.

The codes of conduct, student expectations and core values should be based, in part, on discussions among representatives of the school and community. School leaders should use the discussions and other opportunities to impress upon parents and primary caregivers that they are ultimately responsible for setting norms for acceptable student behavior. Codes of conduct should include the following:

- ✓ A policy position that the illegal possession of weapons, alcohol, tobacco or other drugs is not acceptable and will not be tolerated;
  - ✓ Provisions for services and support for students who have been suspended or expelled from school;
  - ✓ A description of school anti-harassment and anti-violence policies and due process rights;
  - ✓ Requirements for the involvement of school staff, students and families in the development and implementation of fair rules; and
  - ✓ Provisions for schoolwide and classroom support to implement the rules.
- 
- Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools - This publication was developed by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), in part under a grant from NJDOE using federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act funds, and has been disseminated to all chief school administrators. Additional copies are



available from the American Association of Suicidology by contacting (202) 237-2280.

The document provides valuable information for the development of policies and procedures for sudden loss events. The publication includes suggested guidelines for identifying needs, structuring responses to sudden loss events, mobilizing the crisis response team, helping the faculty, addressing parental concerns, working with the media, reaching out to students, utilizing community resources, coping during holidays and vacations, suggested reading for children and sample forms, correspondence and checklists. As a result of NJDOE's project with UMDNJ, University Behavioral HealthCare, a plan for the coordination of services exists in most counties in New Jersey. You may contact the director for the Department of Human Services in your county to obtain a copy of the county plan. UMDNJ's sudden loss services will remain available to schools under support from sources other than NJDOE.

In addition to providing training and technical assistance to schools, UMDNJ has developed a five-part videotape series, in part under a grant from NJDOE, to assist school personnel in planning and responding to sudden loss events. The video series has been disseminated to all school districts to support local professional development and community awareness efforts.

## ***School Security***

### *Needs Assessment of the School Building and Incidents*

A fundamental component of prevention is the maintenance of a safe and caring school campus. "Effective and safe schools communicate a strong sense of security" to the entire school- community (Dwyer et al., 1998). A needs assessment should be

conducted to provide specific information for the development and improvement of school security, and to determine discrepancies between current conditions and desired or required outcomes. Based on the specific needs of the school-community assessed, priorities should be determined for planning effective prevention programs. The following components should be considered in the assessment:

- An assessment of student behavior as it relates to violence and vandalism (e.g., times, locations, types of incidents, participants, prevalence);
- A study of the property immediately surrounding the school-community, similar to the safe and drug-free zone; and
- An examination of the internal perimeter of the school building and grounds (e.g., playgrounds, parking lots, fields).

Described below are types of assessment tools that can be utilized to provide the school with valuable information:

- State Reports - Reports generated from the Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting System (EVVRS) can provide schools with incidence data in four broad categories: violence, vandalism, weapons and substance abuse;
- Site Surveys - A site survey assesses both internal and external aspects of the school. A site survey can evaluate the *general building environment* (e.g., doors, locks, unused portions of the building); the school *interior* (e.g., visible entrance, staff/student identification, proper lighting in all areas, bathrooms checked regularly, staff development and community use of the school); and

- Assessment of Evacuation or Floor Plans - An assessment of evacuation or floor plans can help determine the level of security of available exits and entrances to the building, and it can help in determining staff assignments for particular locations throughout the evacuation plan.

### *School Security Measures*

After conducting an assessment of school property, the physical plant and the number and types of incidents that have occurred in and around the campus, districts should be able to determine the types and costs of general security measures and personnel needed. A priority in addressing physical security is to fix what already exists (e.g., examining door locks and window locks and replacing them, if necessary, is a fundamental security measure). In all instances, schools should determine the least invasive types of security measures that will respond to the school's particular needs in providing a safe environment. Other school security measures to be considered include school identification cards, magnetic door locks, metal scanners or detectors, two-way radios, closed circuit televisions, intercoms, identification tags for gaining entry to locked school entrances, as well as color-coded tags for visitors.

The impact of the physical condition of the school building on student attitude, behavior and motivation to achieve should not be overlooked when addressing the physical makeup of school buildings (Dwyer et al. 1998). There typically tends to be more incidents of fighting and violence in school buildings that are either in need of repair, are unsanitary or are too cold or too hot. According to Dwyer et al., the following strategies can enhance physical safety:

- ✓ Reducing class size;
- ✓ Supervising access to school buildings and school grounds;
- ✓ Closing school campuses during lunch periods;
- ✓ Arranging supervision at critical times (e.g., in hallways between classes); and
- ✓ Staggering dismissal times and lunch periods.

## ***School District Curriculum***

### *Core Curriculum Content Standards*

The creation of safe and disciplined school environments can be enhanced by providing classroom instruction in violence, safety and related life skills and health information under the required Core Curriculum Content Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE). Instruction in life skills, such as social problem solving, decision making and communication, provides students with the behavioral competencies and parameters necessary for supporting safe and respectful school environments. The performance indicators under the CHPE Core Curriculum Content Standards can be achieved either through structured lesson plans and/or through the integration of the CHPE Standards into other subjects.

Additionally, the NJDOE publication titled Curriculum Framework for Health and Physical Education, which has been disseminated to all chief school administrators, includes 140 sample lessons for educators to consider in providing instruction in the CHPE Standard. A number of the lessons address topics related to violence prevention and positive social development, and can serve as guides for the development of school curricula in violence prevention and the promotion of school safety.

The following Standards for both CHPE and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness include various performance indicators that address aspects of student safety, violence and domestic abuse:

#### Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standard

- Standard 2.1 – All students will learn health promotion and disease prevention concepts and health-enhancing behaviors;
- Standard 2.2 – All students will learn health-enhancing personal, interpersonal and life skills;

- Standard 2.3 - All students will learn the physical, mental, emotional and social effects of the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; and
- Standard 2.4 - All students will learn the biological, social, cultural and psychological aspects of human sexuality and family life.

#### Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standard

- Standard 4 - All students will demonstrate self-management skills.

#### *Life Skills*

Students today who are at-risk for school failure experience increased intensity, frequency and exposure to various social problems at younger ages than students ten years ago. While schools are not solely responsible for curing societal ills, they have a role in helping students become good citizens and capable and compassionate adults. Schools are uniquely positioned to provide students with guidance in the areas of personal, interpersonal and life skills.

It has been reported that health-literate and physically educated students communicate effectively and are less likely to engage in “risky” behavior. The infusion of life skills into the curriculum and the development of special programs that impart skills for living can empower students to make healthy decisions and resist behaviors that prevent positive growth and learning.

#### *Character Education*

In character education, the school and community collaboratively identify the core values of the school and work together to teach and reinforce the shared values with children and youth (Otten, 2000). NJDOE administers the Governor's New Jersey Character Education Partnership Initiative (NJCEPI), which provides voluntary state aid to help each public school district develop, implement or enhance character

education programs in a least one school building. Schools may use funds under NJCEPI to support appropriate components of the school safety plan, and should use the core values established in cooperation with the community as a framework for the planning and delivery of their prevention and intervention programs and services.

## ***Prevention Programs and Services***

### *Staff development*

The effective implementation of prevention programs, including prevention education curriculum, should always address the question: “What actions and information are required by each staff member to achieve the goals and objectives of the program or curriculum?” Professional development programs for school safety should support a number of purposes: to enhance the ability of staff to defuse potentially explosive situations; to consistently reinforce the school's comprehensive safety program; to model desired behavior; and to assure appropriate interventions, referrals and support for students who are identified at early stages of risk for a variety of behavior, health or learning problems, and particularly for students who exhibit imminent warning signs for potential to commit violence. To promote school safety beyond the school curriculum, professional development programs should be provided for all school staff, at a minimum, in the following three key areas: conflict resolution, classroom management and identification and referral.

Conflict resolution is an essential skill for maintaining harmony in educational settings. Research studies report the following results when this skill is integrated into the educational process: a reduction in violent incidents, improvement of students' social and emotional development and improvement in classroom management. Having control over the school setting, particularly classrooms, is necessary to provide an optimum level of learning. Generally, the way the classroom is organized, the manner in which school staff communicate with and monitor student performance and the

techniques teachers use to deliver the instructional program all have an effect on student behavior. In addition, being able to identify at risk youth and referring them to appropriate school personnel is conducive to creating a safe school environment.

### *Student Programs*

Increasing students' awareness of the importance of a safe school environment and actively engaging them in the planning process is the first step in having them buy into the goals of a comprehensive program of prevention and intervention. Schools can adopt many different types of prevention and intervention programs and services to impart important skills, establish pro-social norms, actively involve students in the resolution of identified problems or increase students' internal locus of control over problems. Examples of promising prevention and intervention programs include peer mediation, bullying prevention and anti-bias awareness. References are included in Appendix A for a variety of resources that can assist administrators in instructing students in the information and skills necessary for creating a safe environment.

Peer mediation has been demonstrated to be a particularly beneficial conflict resolution approach. In peer mediation programs, training is provided to students who are representative of the student body empowered to help peers resolve or manage disagreements. The training not only provides students with the tools for being effective mediators, but also instills in them invaluable skills for use in their personal lives.

Bullying in school has become a serious problem for many students. “This problem can have negative effects on the general school climate and the right of students to learn in a safe and violent free environment” (a publication by ACCESS ERIC “What Should Parents and Teachers Know about Bullying”). Research indicates that bullying may have lifelong effects on both the victim and perpetrator, including depression, low self-esteem and destructive adult behavior.

Parents can be a vital source in defusing what could be potentially harmful bullying behavior, but often are unaware of bullying issues in their children's schools and uninformed on what to do about bullying behavior. To address the issue of bullying, the research literature suggests the involvement of the entire school community in "No Bullying" programs (examples can be found in Appendix A). Schools can also develop a "No Bullying" policy that supports a safe social and physical climate.

According to the Census 2000 report, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of minorities in the United States, which means that schools are becoming increasingly diverse. Research studies suggest that children at very young ages are aware of the differences between gender, color, physical ability and language. Experts also report that children tend to treat others the way they observe others being treated. Anti-bias awareness programs and recognition of contributions of all cultures can help students and staff address issues of diversity and equity in schools.

#### *Community Outreach and Education*

Developing formal linkages between school and community resources is vital to the establishment of an effective comprehensive safety plan. Community members and agencies should make a commitment to the school for the well being of students and the school should foster the development and maintenance of these relationships. Schools that have established collaborative working relationships with community resources and local law enforcement are better able to serve the at-risk youth in their schools, including the provision of effective prevention and intervention programs. As reported by Dwyer and Osher (2000), community outreach ensures the following: 1) community support for school efforts; 2) coordination of school and community services; 3) shared resources, which reduces fragmentation; and 4) support for family-school collaboration.



It is important to educate the entire community, including community leaders, on the needs of the student population. In particular, providing education for parents and other community members on early and imminent warning signs, what to do in a crisis, how to identify troubled youth, where to go in the event of an emergency and what other community projects and resources are available to them, can benefit the school, as well as the family, the student and the community. Surveying community needs and including parents and other intended recipients in program planning is important for the identification of relevant subject matter and increasing the likelihood of broad participation in community education programs. Distributing a schedule of events to the home and to local community agencies helps to facilitate community and family involvement in community education and outreach programs.

### ***Intervention Programs and Services***

With the increased concern for school violence over the past decade, school staff have taken an increasingly active role in providing a school environment conducive to learning. Therefore, it is imperative school staff receive training in the detection of early and imminent warning signs.

#### *Early Warning Signs*

The identification of early warning signs should not be used to label (as dangerous) individual students who are having behavioral problems in school. The identification of early warning signs should be used to identify suitable assistance for students who have exhibited behavior(s) of concern or to facilitate a referral to appropriate supportive school or community resources. It is important that school staff not overreact to an observation of any of the early warning signs. The early warning signs should only be viewed as cues that may be indicative of a child's need for help. In the publication titled [Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools](#), developed by the United States Department of Education, the following five principles are suggested for using the early warning signs:

- ✓ Do no harm;
- ✓ Understand violence and aggression within a context;
- ✓ Avoid stereotypes;
- ✓ View warning signs within a developmental context; and
- ✓ Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs.

The early warning signs are useful indicators that a child may be at-risk for future behavioral problems. Understanding and integrating the response principles described above gives school staff a perspective for helping students who may be at-risk for a variety of problem behaviors.

As explained in Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools, it is not possible to predict which behavior(s) will precede a violent incident. Research studies, however, indicate that children who exhibit signs of aggression at an early age and do not receive support will develop increasingly aggressive behavior. Research studies also indicate that children who have experienced a positive relationship with an adult can reduce their chances of being involved in violent incidents.

The following list of early warning signs is an excerpt from Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools. The list is informational only and is not meant to be exhaustive or presented in any particular order of severity.

- Social Withdrawal – The withdrawal often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness and lack of confidence.
- Excessive Feelings of Isolation and Being Alone - Information on this indicator is mixed. Research has shown that the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent. However, research has

also shown that in some cases feelings of isolation and not having friends are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.

- Excessive Feelings of Rejection – Children who are troubled often are isolated from their mentally healthy peers. Without support, they may be at risk of expressing emotional distress in negative ways, including violent acts or seeking out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.
- Being a Victim of Violence – Children who are victims of violence, including physical or sexual abuse, are sometimes at risk of becoming violent toward themselves or others.
- Feelings of Being Picked On and Persecuted – These children may initially withdraw socially, but if not given adequate support in addressing these feelings, some children may vent them in inappropriate ways, including possible aggression and violence.
- Low School Interest and Poor Academic Performance – Poor school achievement can be the result of many factors. In some situations, such as when the low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised and denigrated, acting out and aggressive behavior may occur.
- Expression of Violence in Writing and Drawings – An overrepresentation of violence in writing, drawings and music that is directed at specific individuals consistently over time, may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence.
- Uncontrolled Anger - Anger that is expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritants may suggest potential violent behavior toward self or others.

- Patterns of Impulsive and Chronic Hitting, Intimidating and Bullying Behaviors – Some mildly aggressive behaviors such as constant hitting and bullying of others that occur early in children’s lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviors.
- History of Discipline Problems – Chronic behavior and discipline problems, both in school and at home, may suggest that underlying emotional needs are not being met, which may be manifested in acting out and aggressive behavior.
- History of Violent and Aggressive Behavior – Unless provided with support and counseling, a youth who has a history of aggressive or violent behavior is likely to repeat those behaviors. Research suggests that children who engage in aggression and drug abuse before age 12 are more likely to show violence later on than are children who begin such behavior at older ages.
- Intolerance for Differences and Prejudicial Attitudes – Intense prejudice toward others based on racial, ethnic, religious, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability and physical appearance, when coupled with other factors, may lead to violent assaults against those perceived to be different.
- Drug Use and Alcohol Use – Substance use reduces self-control and exposes children and youth to violence, either as perpetrators, as victims or both.
- Affiliation with Gangs – Gangs that support anti-social values and behaviors, including extortion, intimidation and acts of violence toward other students, cause fear and stress among other students. Youth who are influenced by these groups (i.e., those who emulate and copy their behavior, those who become affiliated with them) may adopt these values and act in violent or aggressive ways in certain situations.

- Inappropriate Access to, Possession of, and Use of Firearms – These youth not only have an increased risk for violence, but also have a higher probability of becoming victims of violence.
- Serious Threats of Violence (also an imminent warning sign) – Detailed and specific threats to use violence should be taken very seriously.

### *Imminent Warning Signs*

Whereas early warning signs may indicate risk for future behavioral problems, imminent warning signs are strong indicators that a young person might be very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self and/or to others. Imminent warning signs **require immediate intervention** by school staff and **referral to appropriate school and/or community resources**. It is important for school staff and parents to be trained in the different types of warning signs.

It is important to note that no single warning sign can predict that a dangerous act will occur. Imminent warning signs usually are presented as a sequence of overt, serious, hostile behaviors or threats directed at peers, staff or other individuals. Imminent warning signs are usually evident to more than one staff member, as well as to the young person's family.

As described in Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools, imminent warning signs may include the following:

- ✓ Serious physical fighting with peers or family members;
- ✓ Severe destruction of property;
- ✓ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons;
- ✓ Detailed threats of lethal violence;
- ✓ Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons; and/or

- ✓ Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.

While school officials may encounter several different situations during the school year, which may or may not require immediate action, there are at least two situations, described in the Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools which do require **immediate action** by school officials. **These situations also require the involvement of local law enforcement officials**, according to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-7 through 12, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.2 through 2.5, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.1, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.5 through 5.7:

- **A child has presented a detailed plan (i.e., time, place, method) to harm or kill others, especially when the child has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past; and**
- **A child is carrying a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.**

All school staff, students and parents should be familiar with the referral process for imminent warning signs. This process should be straightforward and consistent with federal and state statutes and regulations, local school board policies and the emergency and crisis management plan.

Parents should be immediately notified when their child has exhibited imminent warning signs. Schools should provide assistance to the family for obtaining appropriate community services (Dwyer and Osher, 2000). Many schools either have trained professional staff on site or can readily access representatives of community agencies who can help the family in the assessment and referral process.

### *Intervention and Referral Services*

Constantly evolving social conditions and the changing educational needs that tend to emerge with these changes can pose dramatic obstacles to student achievement and precipitate hazardous behaviors. The types of general at risk behaviors students may manifest while in school include fighting, defying authority, cheating, tardiness, truancy, decreased participation, not concentrating or focusing on learning, not completing assignments, falling asleep, acting out, violating rules and dropping out of school. These and other issues place students at risk for school failure and other difficulties, leaving parents and teachers frustrated and in need of assistance.

The New Jersey State Board of Education has adopted rules to provide district boards of education with standards for Intervention and Referral Services, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7, to ensure that schools have proactive mechanisms for addressing at-risk student behavior. The regulations provide schools with direction in formulating a coordinated system, using a multidisciplinary team approach in each school building, for addressing the full range of student learning, behavior and health difficulties and for assisting staff who have difficulties in addressing students' problems.

In support of these regulations, the New Jersey Department of Education has issued to all chief school administrators the following materials: 1) Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services for General Education Pupils (I&RS), and 2) Intervention and Referral Services for General Education Pupils: A Four-Part Videotape Program Series and Companion Guide. The Resource Manual is a comprehensive resource on the operation of I&RS teams and provides extensive information and materials that support the planning, development, implementation, evaluation and maintenance of these building-based problem-solving teams. (A revised version of the Resource Manual that incorporates changes made to the I&RS administrative code is planned for

distribution to schools at a later date.) The video series provides schools with tools to support local professional development efforts.

### *School-Community Linkages*

Since schools are frequently faced with students' behavioral problems and other social needs that extend beyond the purview of the educational setting, networking with local community resources is essential. In accordance with the regulations for Intervention and Referral Services, schools are required to "Coordinate the services of community-based social and health provider agencies and other community resources for achieving the outcomes identified in the intervention and referral services plans." (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2(a)8). In addition, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.3(a)3 obligates schools to "Identify the roles, responsibilities and parameters for the participation of community members for aiding in the development and implementation of intervention and referral services action plans."

### Service Agreements

In developing linkages with community agencies, appropriate school staff should, to the extent possible, establish personal relationships with agency staff. The chances of gaining prompt access to a facility's services can be significantly improved when there are established contacts. These relationships are most important in times of crises or emergencies when response time can literally be the difference between life and death, or can affect the choice of a student and/or his family to cooperate and enter a program.

Schools should also establish letters of agreement that clearly and concisely describe protocols for the cooperative relationship and exchange of pertinent information between the two agencies. It is important that the agreement detail the specific staff positions involved and their appropriate roles.



Examples of the minimum types of information that should be addressed in these agreements are provided below:

- Initial Contact – Who will be responsible for contacting the agency? Is there a central contact at the agency and a protocol for the contact? What information is needed at the time of contact?
- Transportation and Arrival of the Student – What arrangements will be made or parameters will be placed on getting the student to the agency?
- Release of Information To and From Both Institutions – What will be the procedures for exchanging sensitive information and documents, particularly those which are limited under federal and/or state statutes and regulations?
- Provision of an Educational Program – What arrangements will be made to ensure that students are provided with educational programs that are consistent with the regulations for Home or Out-of-School Instruction for General Education Students N.J.A.C. 6A:6-9 et seq.)?
- Communication While a Student is Receiving Services – How will ongoing communication take place between the institutions? What will be the nature and limits of discussions?
- Consultation in Aftercare Planning and Transitions Back to School – Schools can expect to receive guidance from agencies on what to anticipate from students upon their return to school and suggestions for preparing for discharge of the student and supporting students upon reentry. What specific steps will the school take to ease students' transitions to school and continue to support their health, well-being and academic performance?

### Resource File

Schools should also maintain a current resource file of available agencies and services which includes the following information for each resource:

- ✓ Resource name;
- ✓ Description of the resource and its services, including hours of operation;
- ✓ Contact persons and their titles/roles;
- ✓ Street and postal addresses, as well as electronic mail addresses;
- ✓ Phone and facsimile numbers;
- ✓ Admission requirements; and
- ✓ Financial arrangements.

Schools should strive to maintain relationships with a continuum of services (e.g., mental health services, drug/alcohol services, public health services, juvenile justice agencies, family support services) that will enable them to respond to an array of problems and crises. See Appendix B for a description of the categories of agencies identified above.

### Law Enforcement Relationship

The Uniform Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials is a formal mechanism, which outlines the basis for sharing information between education and law enforcement representatives, as well as sets parameters for law enforcement investigations.

A process for the local chief school administrator and appropriate law enforcement officials to discuss the implementation and need for revising the agreement or memorandum of understanding, and to review the effectiveness of policies and procedures implemented should take place on an annual basis. The annual review should include input from the county superintendent,

community members and meeting(s) with the county prosecutor and such other law enforcement officials designated by the county prosecutor.

## **PART THREE**

# **SCHOOL BUILDING EMERGENCY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

# SCHOOL BUILDING EMERGENCY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

A vital piece of a comprehensive school district safety plan is a school-specific emergency and crisis management plan. Research, including Dwyer, et al. (1998), suggests that the following components should be addressed in an emergency and crisis management plan for each school building:

- 1) Procedures for intervening during a crisis to ensure safety and timely communication; and
- 2) Procedures for responding and sharing information in the aftermath of a tragedy.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2, Emergency and Crisis Management Plans, “Each local board of education shall establish plans, procedures and mechanisms for responding to emergencies and crises. The plans, at a minimum, shall provide for: 1) The protection of the health, safety and welfare of the school population; and 2) Supportive services for staff, students and their families.”

## *Process for Developing an Emergency and Crisis Management Plan (ECMP)*

A proactive approach is essential for developing school and community readiness to respond to crises (e.g., homicides, suicides, natural disasters, accidental deaths of students, parents or school staff) that occur both in and around schools, since there is no telling when or where a crisis will occur. The existence of an emergency and crisis management plan can assist in reducing the confusion that often occurs during a crisis and is crucial for the successful implementation of the emergency and crisis

management component of the comprehensive school safety plan. A planned intervention provides the school with an avenue of help, particularly for students who have exhibited imminent warning signs. In the event of a crisis, this intervention is utilized to provide direct services to students, staff and/or community members. Described below are some considerations for the establishment of an effective emergency and crisis management plan.

#### *Forming a Planning Committee*

The Emergency Crisis Management Plan (ECMP) should be developed by a committee of school representatives, some of which may include those participating on other school or district committees. The ECM planning committee should give careful consideration to the process to be employed for establishing an effective emergency and crisis management plan. Attention should be given to adopting a planning process that will produce a plan that addresses the unique characteristics and resources of local schools and communities. Outlined below are some considerations for establishing a planning committee. While the manner in which each school planning committee designs and implements its emergency and crisis management plan will vary, according to Dwyer et al. (2000) the following elements should be addressed by all school-wide committees:

- *Make a Commitment* - The committee should set reasonable timelines for reaching its goals and objectives.
- *Obtain Appropriate Approval* – In addition to obtaining approval for the plan, the committee should strive to institutionalize changes set forth in the plan. This may require formal approval from institutions included in the plan, such as the board of education, county, municipal government or governing boards of human service agencies.

- *Provide Sufficient Training* - All committee members should receive training to help prepare them to be effective members of the committee. Committee members should also be provided with ongoing, relevant training and support. Additionally, all school and community members assigned responsibilities for implementing components of the plan should be provided with appropriate training, materials and support, which should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Examples of training methods include the following:
  - In-service training programs;
  - Attendance at conferences;
  - Use of outside consultants;
  - Visitations with other schools and/or community agencies;
  - Community awareness programs;
  - Print and broadcast media;
  - Written manuals, pamphlets or flip charts; and
  - Practice in implementing components of the plan.
  
- *Seek Parental Involvement* – Parents are essential participants in the planning process. There should be open lines of communication with all parents of students in the school throughout the process.
  
- *Ensure Diversity* - Schools should ensure that the committee is comprised of a school administrator, school social worker and/or other student service staff, instructional staff, community relations personnel, school nurse, security officer and transportation, maintenance and office staff, as well as mental health professionals, law enforcement personnel and health service providers. Care should also be given to ensure representation of bilingual or other staff who represent the cultural composition of the school.

### *Collaboration and Community Agency Networking*

An emergency and crisis management plan requires collaboration with an array of individuals and agencies, such as school staff, county superintendent, law enforcement agencies, local government officials, emergency medical services, mental health agencies, youth services, businesses, parent organizations and special interest groups (e.g., faith-based agencies). All involved should know what is expected of them under the emergency and crisis management plan. Community agency networking is another important step in the development of the emergency and crisis management components of the comprehensive school safety plan. Schools should develop relationships with local agencies and establish service agreements with community agencies prior to the onset of crises. The components of these service agreements are summarized in the section of the Guide titled Intervention Programs and Services.

### ***Elements of an Emergency and Crisis Management Plan***

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2, Emergency and crisis management plan, district boards of education are required to establish plans, procedures and mechanisms for responding to emergencies and crisis. Schools should consider addressing the following provisions, at a minimum, in their emergency and crisis management plan:

- An evacuation procedure (e.g., floor plan for exiting the building);
- A communication system (e.g., crisis kits, classroom information, coordinating with the communications media, providing information to parents/guardians);
- A process for securing immediate internal/external support (e.g. lockdown, building security); and



- Opportunities for practice.

Several local emergency and crisis management plans have been developed than can provide guidance in the development of local plans. For example, the Somerset County School Violence Task Force developed a school emergency management plan in September 1999, and the Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office and the Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management collaboratively developed a model school crisis management plan in January 2000. You may contact the above mentioned counties for a copy of their plans.

### ***Training and Development***

In order to maintain a standard for the delivery of emergency and crisis management services, NJDOE has established the following requirement under N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2(c), Emergency and Crisis Management Plans, “The district shall develop and provide an in-service training program for school staff to enable them to recognize and appropriately respond to crises, consistent with the district’s plans, procedures and mechanisms for managing crises.” Furthermore, boards of education are required to review and update the in-service training program on an annual basis (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.2(c)1).

Because crisis events may occur anywhere, it is important that all staff (e.g., administrative staff, clerical and support staff, food service staff and lunch aides, transportation staff, maintenance staff, instructional staff, student support services staff) receive training in support of the emergency and crisis management plan. At a minimum, staff should receive thorough training on the procedures established under the ECMP, the indicators of early and imminent warning signs and intervention strategies and procedures, incorporating the five principles for use of the early warning signs that are described in this section. Resources to support staff development programs are included in Appendix A.

## *Communicating with the Print and Broadcast Media*

The emergency and crisis management plan should include a specific procedure for coordinating and communicating with print and broadcast media. Underwood et al. (1997), in Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools, recommend that administrators address the following regarding communications media contacts:

- ✓ Appoint only one media spokesperson from the school or school district and make it clear that no other staff are to speak with the media;
- ✓ Designate one back-up for the designated spokesperson;
- ✓ Provide staff with instructions for phone contact with the communications media; (i.e., how to direct media representatives to the identified spokesperson);
- ✓ Provide media representatives with an official written statement about the event; and
- ✓ Reinforce school-community prevention strategies with the media.

As part of the planning process, school administrators should also identify the designated spokesperson for the law enforcement community. School administrators and law enforcement officials should agree upon their respective roles in coordinating with the communications media. Typically the designated school spokesperson is responsible for addressing only school-related issues and the law enforcement representative is authorized only to address investigation issues, as appropriate to each situation.

Underwood et al. (1997) also suggest the following helpful tips for sharing information with the media:

- ✓ Establish relationships with the news media prior to the occurrence of a crisis. Explain concerns about possible consequences of dramatizing coverage and the risks of copycat behaviors, especially in the case of suicides;
- ✓ Particularly when there is widespread impact of the event, establish a central location away from the school, for media inquiries and use by the spokespersons from various community agencies;
- ✓ Avoid placing blame by coaching the media spokesperson; and
- ✓ Advise survivors, such as family members and friends of the victim, that they are not obligated to speak to media representatives.

Remember to take advantage of opportunities to use the communications media to inform community members of available services in the aftermath of a tragedy. This is especially useful when the event occurs during periods when schools are not in session and when access to parents and students are limited.

## **PART FOUR**

### **CRISIS RESPONSE TO A VIOLENT EVENT**

# *Crisis Response to a Violent Event*

Maintaining order when a crisis event occurs is possibly the hardest aspect of the emergency and crisis management plan. The size of the school will help administrators determine which interventions are most suitable for their school. For example, a small school may decide to utilize the district crisis response team or contract with an outside social service agency to provide on site crisis response. A larger school may create a school team that provides intervention on site. If a school team is decided upon, it is important that all staff be properly trained and prepared to perform assigned duties. The information that follows will provide guidance for what schools should consider when developing the roles of school officials and community agencies in the event of a crisis.

## *Role of Principal*

During a crisis event on school property, the principal is often the first school employee to respond. The principal is responsible for organizing building staff and overseeing implementation of the crisis plan. The principal should exercise leadership in addressing staff, parents and community members. The principal should speak with the communications media only if he/she is designated as the official spokesperson for the school or the district. As explained in Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools, a few additional examples of tasks that administrators should be responsible for include:

- ✓ Mobilizing those responsible for responding to the emergency or crisis;
- ✓ Assembling staff to inform them of the situation;
- ✓ Preparing a written statement to staff and students; and

- ✓ Maintaining the school schedule as closely as possible.

### ***Role of District Administrator***

The chief school administrator also has duties to perform in the event of a tragedy. Underwood et al. (1997) recommend the following responsibilities for chief school administrators:

- Verify the incident;
- Notify key district administrators;
- Notify those responding to the emergency or crisis;
- Appoint one media spokesperson;
- Provide support to the school that has survived the tragedy; and
- Recommend district policy for faculty, staff and student participation in memorial activities.

### ***Role of County and Local Officials, Agencies and Organizations***

Every school should have a list of local agencies and organizations and be clear about the agreed upon procedures for accessing their services. The procedures for accessing obtaining services should be outlined in the district's service agreement with each agency and organization. Schools should have a designated contact person for each agency and a back up person, in the event that the designated contact person is absent. The type of agency that will be called upon in the event of a crisis will depend on the type of crisis event that occurs.

## *Postvention in the Aftermath of an Emergency or Crisis*

Providing follow up with staff and students after a crisis event is critical to maintaining order in the school and helping members of the school-community to move beyond the crisis. Dwyer et al. (1998) suggest five strategies that have been effective in responding in the aftermath of emergency or crisis events:

- ✓ Help parents understand children's reactions to the emergency or crisis;
- ✓ Help staff deal with their reactions to the emergency or crisis;
- ✓ Help students and staff adjust after the emergency or crisis;
- ✓ Help victims and family members of victims re-enter the school environment; and
- ✓ Help students and staff address the return of a previously removed student to the school- community.

An emergency or crisis event involving a member of the school-community creates a crisis for all of the remaining members. Therefore, once an event has occurred and appropriate crisis response has been completed, there is still work to do. Attending to the following guiding principles can help decrease the risk of imitation after an emergency or crisis event:

- ✓ Nothing should be done to glamorize or dramatize the event;
- ✓ Doing nothing can be as dangerous as doing too much; and
- ✓ Students are less likely to be helped until assistance is provided to school staff.

The school's primary task should be to deal with the grief of school and community members who are the survivors of the tragedy. A helpful approach for addressing the aftermath of an emergency or crisis event involves the provision of support, control and structure to stabilize a situation until it can return to its pre-crisis state.

### *Support*

Providing both students and staff the opportunity to express their grief over a loss and/or their shock over a crisis is essential to the healing process. It is noteworthy to remember that while some of the feelings of grief may seem uncontrollable, the process for grieving is not.

While every situation is unique, the research literature suggests that there are common stages people go through for dealing with crisis. Understanding these stages can enable the Emergency and Crisis Response Team to understand people's reactions to the event and appropriately support them as they move through the grieving process. It is also important for the team to understand the different ways children and parents deal with grief. Understanding these differences is important for planning purposes, as well as for structuring appropriate interventions and referrals.

### *Control*

While it is imperative that staff and students feel supported by the administration, care should be taken to ensure that the grieving process does not consume the school. Providing support in a controlled environment is necessary to provide staff members and students with a supportive outlet for their grief. Providing an allotted time during the school day when counseling services are available or providing a forum for students and staff to discuss their feelings surrounding the event can assist in the healing process. An open forum can also reduce any rumors surrounding the event; however, individuals should be allowed to discuss the situation and their feelings about the event in individualized or small group settings that are facilitated by trained professionals.

Small group formats are more manageable and permit full attention to individuals' thoughts and feelings, increase opportunities to clarify any miscommunications and



provide openings for professionals to intervene and ward off potential issues. Large group settings tend to be unwieldy, heighten negative emotions, which can be dangerous and counterproductive, increase the chances of misinterpretations, decrease the chances that other high-risk students will be identified and minimize the chances for constructive dialogue or healing.

### *Structure*

Maintaining the regular routine of the school day is essential after the school community has experienced a violent event. Underwood et al. (1997) suggest that maintaining the structure of the school day (e.g., following class schedule, not dismissing early) provides a degree of predictability for those dealing with the acute uncertainty that follows a tragedy. For example, while school officials may approve student and staff requests to attend memorial services during the school day, they should keep school open and maintain the regular schedule for staff and students who choose not to attend memorial services.

## **CONCLUSION**

# CONCLUSION

All things considered, most schools are safe places for children and adolescents. Statistics indicate that students are more at risk of being victims of violence or for committing acts of violence outside the school than on school grounds. National events over the past few years, however, have demonstrated that no school is immune from violent incidents, and all schools should have in place proactive policies and plans for sudden loss events. Research studies indicate that districts can develop comprehensive school safety plans that create secure environments conducive to learning when they apply fundamental guidelines in the areas of prevention, intervention and emergency and crisis management planning and response.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## Bibliography

Dwyer, K. and Osher, D. (2000). Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, American Institutes for Research.

Dwyer, K., Osher, D., and Warger, C., (1998). Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Otten, E. H. (2000). "Character Education. Eric Digest." Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC). ERIC Identifier: ED444932.

Publication by ACCESS ERIC "What Should Parents and Teachers Know about Bullying", found at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/bullying.html>.

Underwood, M. and Dunne-Maxim, K., (1997). Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools, New Jersey Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project.

## **Appendix A**

Resources: Local, County, State and National

List of publications, journal articles, web sites, supportive organizations,  
resources for training and development,  
and government resources are provided in this section

## Publications

Greenstone, J.L., and Levittown, S.C. (1993). Elements of crisis intervention: Crises & how to respond to them. California: Brooks/Cole.

Petersen, S. and Straub, R.L. (1992) School crisis survival guide. West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education.

Pitcher, G.D. and Poland, S. (1992). Crisis intervention in the schools. New York: The Guildford Press.

Volpe, J. S., Lerner, M. D., and Lindell, B., (1999). A Practical Guide for Crisis Response in Our Schools, Third Edition. Commack, New York: The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.

## *ON-LINE DOCUMENTS*

---

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html>: The U.S. Department of Education has published “*Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*,” to help states and communities prevent school violence through comprehensive prevention and intervention programs.

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/ActionGuide.html>: *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide* is available on the USDOE’s Web Site.

<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/school/>: To view/print the Memorandum of Agreement and the “Search and Seizure” manual between the Department of Education and the Office of the Attorney General.

<http://www.publiceducation.org>: “Increasing Safety in America’s Public Schools” (2001) Public Education Network. A network of independent, community-based school reform organizations.

<http://www.eduhound.com> “The Engine for Everything Education K-12”. Search the site by subject, click onto “safety and security”.

<http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org> or (800) 638-8736; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention “Reducing Youth Violence: A Comprehensive Approach” (Version 2, Sept. 1999) a multimedia CD-ROM.

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html>: Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm>: Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook of Community Action

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/resources/gangs.html>: Gang Violence Resources

---

## Professional Development and Training

<http://www.princetonleadership.org>: Princeton Peer to Peer Leadership

<http://www.casel.org>: The Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning

<http://www.nssc1.org>: National School Safety Center:

<http://www.cadca.org>: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

<http://www.americanschoolsafety.com/> AmericanSchoolSafety.com – enhancing school safety and security through assessments and planning resulting in reduction of school violence.

<http://www.nccre.org> National Center for Conflict Resolution Education



<http://www.proteacher.com>: ProTeacher is a professional community for elementary school teachers, specialists, and student teachers in grades preK-6.

---

## State Agencies

The following state agencies have been listed because of their programs for youth.

**New Jersey Department of Education:** <http://www.state.nj.us/education>

**New Jersey Department of Human Services:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/index.html>

**New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/health/index.html>

**New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/index.html>

**New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Markets, Child Nutrition Programs:** <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/markets/childnutrition.htm>

**New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division of Fire Safety:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dfs/kidspage.htm>

**New Jersey Department of Corrections, Community Outreach Programs:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/corrections/academy/pp.html>

**New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, National Guard Family Programs:** [http://www.state.nj.us/military/familysupport/youth\\_camp.html](http://www.state.nj.us/military/familysupport/youth_camp.html) and  
<http://www.state.nj.us/military/chall/njchall.htm>

**New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, SEEDS Program:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/seeds/>

**New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife:** <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/>

**New Jersey Department of Transportation, Urban Youth Corp Programs:**  
<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/index.htm>

**New Jersey Department of State:** <http://www.state.nj.us/state/>

**V-Free Youth Initiative, Center for Youth Policy and Programs, NJ Department of State** <http://www.state.nj.us/state/njyouth/vfree>

---

Local  
Organizations

New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association: <http://www.njpsa.org>

New Jersey School Counselor Association: <http://www.njsca.org>

The Violence Institute of New Jersey at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey: <http://www.umdnj.edu/vinjweb>

---

School  
Safety—  
Related Web-  
Sites

American School Safety: <http://www.americanschoolsafety.com>

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice: <http://www.air.org/cecp/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC): <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc>

East Coast Gang Investigator's Association (E.C.G.I.A): [www.ecgia.com](http://www.ecgia.com)

Hamilton Fish Institute for School and Community Violence: <http://hamfish.org>

Join Together Online: <http://www.jointogether.org>

Keep Schools Safe: <http://www.keepschoolssafe.org>

National Association of School Psychologists:  
<http://www.nasponline.org/index2.html>

National Campaign Against Youth Violence: <http://www.noviolence.net>

National Institute for School and Workplace Safety: <http://www.nisws.com>

National Mental Health Association: <http://www.nmha.org/>

National Network of Family Resiliency: <http://www.nnfr.org/violence>

---

**The National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners:**  
<http://www2.edc.org/nvpp>:

**National Resource Center for Safe Schools:** <http://www.safetyzone.org>

**National School Safety Center:** <http://www.nssc1.org>

**National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center:** <http://www.safeyouth.org>

**National Youth Gang Center (NYGC), Institute for Intergovernmental Research:**  
[www.iir.com/nygc](http://www.iir.com/nygc)

**Nationwide School Violence Prevention Hotline;** [schoolwarning@yahoo.com](mailto:schoolwarning@yahoo.com)

**Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory:** <http://www.nwrel.org>

**Partnership Against Violence Network:** [www.pavnet.org](http://www.pavnet.org)

---

**Student  
Support and  
Classroom  
Management  
Web-Sites**

**The Behavior Home Page:** <http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/behavior/homepage.html>

**Bully B'ware Productions:** <http://www.bullybeware.com>

**Bully OnLine:** <http://www.successunlimited.co.uk/>

**Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support:** <http://www.pbis.org>

**Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders:** <http://www.ccbd.net>

**National Center for Conflict Resolution Education:** <http://www.nccre.org>.

---

**Prevention and Early Intervention: Collaboration and Practice:**

<http://cecp.air.org/prev-ei>

**Prevention Strategies That Work:**

<http://cecp.air.org/preventionstrategies/Default.htm>

**The Center for Mental Health Services, School Violence Prevention:**

[www.mentalhealth.org/schoolviolence/index.htm](http://www.mentalhealth.org/schoolviolence/index.htm)

**UCLA School Mental Health Project – Center for Mental Health in the Schools:**

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/temphome.htm>

**Wraparound Planning:** <http://cecp.air.org/wraparound/default.htm>

---

## Federal Web-Sites

**U.S. Department of Education:** <http://www.ed.gov>

**Office for Civil Rights:** <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR>

**Office of Special Education Programs:** <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>

**Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program** <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** <http://www.hhs.gov>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Violence Prevention:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>

**Center for Mental Health Services:** <http://www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs>

**National Institute of Mental Health:** <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

**U.S. Department of Justice:** <http://www.usdoj.gov>

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention:** <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

**Justice for Kids and Youth Homepage:** <http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage>

---

## Organization Web-Sites

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:** <http://www.aacap.org>

**American Academy of Pediatrics:** <http://www.aap.org>

**American Association of School Administrators:** <http://www.aasa.org>

**American Counseling Association:** <http://www.counseling.org>

**American Federation of Teachers:** <http://www.aft.org>

**American Psychiatric Association:** <http://www.psych.org>

**American Psychological Association:** <http://www.apa.org>

**American School Counselor Association:** <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>

**Council of Administrators of Special Education:** <http://members.aol.com/casecec>

**Council of the Great City Schools:** <http://www.cgcs.org>

**Council for Exceptional Children:** <http://www.cec.sped.org>

---

National Association of Elementary School Principals: <http://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses: <http://www.nasn.org>

National Association of Secondary School Principals: <http://www.nassp.org>

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW): <http://www.naswdc.org>

National Association of State Boards of Education: <http://www.nasbe.org>

National Middle School Association: <http://www.nmsa.org>

---

**NATIONAL  
EDUCATION**

**ASSOCIATION:**

[HTTP://WWW.NEA  
.ORG](http://www.nea.org)

National School Boards Association: <http://www.nsba.org>

National School Public Relations Association: <http://www.nspra.org/entry.htm>

Police Executive Research Forum: <http://www.policeforum.org>

School Social Work Association of America: <http://www.sswaa.org>

---

Family  
Information  
Web-Sites

The Beach Center on Families and Disability: <http://www.beachcenter.org/>

Boys Town USA: <http://www.boystown.org>

Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network:  
<http://cyfernet.org>

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health: <http://www.ffcmh.org/>

National Parent Network on Disabilities: <http://www.npnd.org>

National PTA: <http://www.pta.org/index.stm>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center:  
<http://www.pacer.org>

Project for Parents of Children with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders:  
<http://www.pacer.org/ebd/index.htm>

# Appendix B

## Agency Descriptions

Descriptions of types of agencies schools should network with

(Adapted from the Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services for General Education Pupils developed by the New Jersey Department of Education)



***AGENCY DESCRIPTIONS:  
Working with Community Resources***

All institutions of society have necessary parts to play in addressing the underlying social causes of high-risk behavior. This responsibility, however:

- 1) *is not borne exclusively or primarily by schools; and*
- 2) *is not within the capabilities of the education system alone to address.*

The primary mission of schools is to provide quality instruction in safe learning environments. It is not the job of schools to provide a panacea for all of society's problems. Community institutions and organizations other than schools have responsibilities to fulfill in the remediation of students who have pathological problems or those that have become severely and chronically disruptive to the educational process. Schools, however, can serve as points of contact and facilitate the transition between students and the many institutions and agencies designed to serve them. Schools can also function as advocates for services on behalf of the interests of students and parents.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2(a)3 of the Intervention and Referral Services regulations, schools are required to:

*“Develop and implement action plans which provide for appropriate school or **community** interventions or referrals to school and **community** resources, based on the collected data and desired outcomes for the identified learning, behavior and health difficulties;”*  
(Italics and bold added.)

In addition, under N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2(a)8, schools are obligated to:

*“Coordinate the services of **community-based** social and health provider agencies and **other community resources** for achieving the outcomes identified in the intervention and referral services action plans;”*  
(Italics and bold added.)

*Supportive Organizations/Resources*

The vast number and variety of community-based agencies and the pervasive and rapid changes to health care delivery systems prohibit a listing of available community resources. Described below, however, are some government and related resources that can help schools address the identified needs of students:

- ❑ Identify appropriate resources (e.g., agencies, funding) for addressing the specific needs of individual cases, either within or outside of the school’s area; and
- ❑ Utilize existing service delivery systems.

Whether the specific resources described below or others are involved in student cases, schools should establish *written letters of agreement* with provider agencies and other supportive community resources, where possible, to formalize their work relationships and provide protocols for helping students, particularly in the event of emergencies. Suggestions for issues to be addressed in the letters of agreement are provided in the section of the Guide titled Intervention Programs and Services.

## **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Mental health services in New Jersey are provided through a variety of hospitals, agencies and independent practitioners, in group and solo practices. These entities accept private insurance and public funding for payment.

Listings for emergency mental health resources can be found on the first page of each county’s telephone book. Other county mental health resources can be found in the Action Index in the telephone book for each county under the following headings: “Adolescent and Child Counseling,” “Mental Health Services” and “Psychiatric Services.” Schools can also refer to the blue pages of their local phone books for information on supportive government resources.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJDHS), Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS) is responsible for the delivery of public mental health services. DMHS prioritizes the delivery of services to young people with serious emotional disturbances. DMHS, together with the Division of Youth and Family Services, NJDHS, provides a system of care that includes psychiatric inpatient settings, (e.g., state psychiatric hospitals), residential and community-based treatment, as well as rehabilitative and social support services. School staff may contact DMHS directly at (800) 382-6717 to obtain information regarding appropriate regional staff who can provide assistance to their district.

Schools may also consult with professional associations, such as the New Jersey Association of Mental Health Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHA). NJAMHA can supply each school with information on the member community mental health service providers in the school’s area. This information may be obtained by contacting the Office Manager for NJAMHA at (732) 528-0900.

NJDHS can provide direct assistance to schools in either the provision or coordination of mental health services. Direct assistance to schools is available through NJDHS' Youth Incentive Program (YIP). YIP is a statewide program of individualized service planning and cross-service development. NJDHS has established the following resources at the county level in support of YIP:

### **Case Assessment Resource Team (CART)**

CARTs typically bring together representatives from agencies that provide direct services to young persons and families to coordinate service planning. Funds from a variety of sources, usually within NJDHS, are used to provide services that focus on the needs of the child and the family, often in non-traditional ways. Depending on the county's capacity to serve priority populations (i.e., youth in psychiatric hospitals, youth placed by NJDHS in residential treatment, youth at-risk for placement in residential treatment centers), the CART may also serve youth outside of the priority groups, who are at risk for therapeutic out-of-home placement.

Most important to schools, CARTs will include school staff in the design and implementation of service plans for individual young persons and their families, whether or not the school is a standing member of the CART. Therefore, it is important for schools to establish a work relationship with their respective CART coordinator to benefit from this county-based coordinating and problem-solving mechanism.

### **County Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC)**

CIACCs operate in each county under protocols established by NJDHS. The CIACCs monitor the operations of the respective CARTs. They also identify priorities for service development, as well as service gaps and barriers, and report these to state and county government agencies.

CIACCs strive to represent all systems that serve children and youth. School representatives may choose to participate in the county-level systems planning and development undertaken by the CIACCs to attend to the interests and needs of their student populations.

## **DRUG/ALCOHOL SERVICES**

New Jersey has a comprehensive system of drug/alcohol service providers. To identify available substance abuse prevention and treatment resources, schools should either contact the Division of Addiction Services (DAS), New Jersey Department of Health

and Senior Services, at (609) 292-4414, or the local chapter of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence at (800) 225-0196.

Information on drug and alcohol resources can be found in the Action Index in the telephone book for each county under the following headings: “Alcoholism Information and Treatment Centers” and “Drug.” Schools may also refer to the blue pages of their local phone books for information on supportive government agencies. Described below is the primary planning and coordinating body for substance abuse services that exists in each county.

### **Local Advisory Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (LACADA)**

The governing body of each county, in conjunction with the county’s office on alcoholism and drug abuse, has established a LACADA. The LACADA exists to assist the governing body in the development of the annual comprehensive plan for substance abuse services. The LACADA and the designated drug/alcohol administrative authority in each county can assist in identifying appropriate prevention, intervention, treatment and aftercare services or in responding to priority service needs.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**

Schools can play an important role in linking students with appropriate public health services. Described below are some resources that either provide public health services or contribute consultation and technical assistance regarding health issues.

### ***School Nurses Associations***

Schools frequently access or obtain information about the public health system through the school nurse. Each county has a County School Nurse Association that can help facilitate understanding of available public health resources and provide consultation for accessing public health services. Consult a school nurse for information on the County School Nurse Association in your area or the New Jersey State School Nurses Association.

## ***Public Health Departments***

New Jersey has a statewide system of public health services. The public health department in each county or locale is available to provide technical assistance with health issues and provide information on available resources. Refer to the blue pages of your local phone book for the phone number of the public health department in your area.

The primary mission of the health departments is to provide efficient cost saving services to the community on either a local or countywide basis. The health departments provide the following services:

- ❑ *Public Health Clinics* – Primary care is provided for the indigent. These services include the following programs: Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides free food and baby formula; Tuberculosis services (e.g., testing, treatment); Baby Clinics; Mammogram Program; Pre-natal Clinics; and services for those with Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) and Sexually-transmitted Diseases (STDs).
- ❑ *Human Services* – Each department offers a different array of mental health and addictions services.
- ❑ *Communicable Disease Clinics* – Education is provided to the public on how diseases are communicated. Additionally, the departments inspect nursing homes and investigate outbreaks of food poisonings.
- ❑ *Environmental Services* – These services, which are primarily regulatory, aim to protect the environment (e.g., maintain sanitation, maintain water quality, check wells, check septic systems).
- ❑ *Animal Shelters* – The departments provide animal and rabies control. They also contract with municipalities for the care of animals.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The New Jersey law enforcement system is comprised of state, county and local agencies responsible for ensuring the public safety and enforcing criminal laws. New Jersey is unique in that all law enforcement agencies are supervised and coordinated by the Attorney General. This integrated law enforcement system was designed to better protect and serve the community, provide a focused and more efficient effort to prosecute criminals; prevent and deter criminal activity; and assist the general public in times of crisis.

The local police departments (or State police in municipalities that do not have their own police department) are the primary agencies that should be contacted by local schools and community members. As the first responders to a crisis, local police officers are responsible for public protection, determining what actions should be taken, assisting victims, investigating crimes, and filing initial charges where appropriate. Additionally, specialized officers deal with preventing drug and alcohol abuse among youth, deal with domestic violence issues, engage in community policing activities, and work within the schools themselves in some jurisdictions.

The county prosecutors in each of New Jersey's twenty-one counties act as the chief law enforcement officer in their respective counties and supervise the local police departments within their jurisdiction. They are also the primary prosecutorial agencies which supervise municipal prosecutors and prosecute crimes committed within their county. They also have specialized units dealing with the investigation of major crimes, domestic violence, narcotics, and crimes committed by juveniles.

The Attorney General's powers of supervision and coordination of law enforcement agencies in New Jersey are exercised through the Division of Criminal Justice. The Division investigates and prosecutes crimes on a statewide basis, for example, prosecuting crimes where there is a conflict of interest for the county prosecutor, cases which encompass more than one county, or cases which generally require a great deal of resources and manpower. The Division of Criminal Justice also represents the Attorney General on numerous statewide agencies, boards and commissions, representing the law enforcement perspective and providing experience and assistance as appropriate. The Division also promulgates guidelines for various law enforcement issues under the auspices of the Attorney General such as narcotics enforcement, juvenile justice, domestic violence, and victim's rights to name a few.

In the vast majority of cases, school officials and community members should contact their local police department directly in the event of a crisis or suspected criminal activity. For additional information, contact your county prosecutor or the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice at 609-984-6500.



**JUVENILE JUSTICE**

New Jersey has a comprehensive system of services that address juvenile issues for those students entering or who are returning from the juvenile justice system. The primary resources for juvenile issues in New Jersey are described below.

### ***Juvenile Conference Committees***

Many communities in New Jersey have established Juvenile Conference Committees (JCCs) to work with pre-adjudicated juvenile offenders. JCCs are volunteer citizen advisory panels that are appointed by the Family Division Judge of the Superior Court.

JCCs review offenses such as criminal mischief, criminal trespass, shoplifting, attempted theft, theft, receiving stolen property, simple assault and disorderly persons offenses. JCCs are responsible for the following functions:

- 1) *conducting confidential hearings regarding a juvenile's offense(s); and*
- 2) *interviewing the juvenile, the juvenile's parent(s) and the complainant.*

Based on the interviews, JCCs make recommendations (e.g., counseling, restitution, community work programs, letters of apology, other sanctions) to the Family Court Judge that are intended to help the child become a responsible adult. If the parties (i.e., juvenile, juvenile's parents, complainant) agree and the Family Court Judge approves the recommendations, they become a court order. The JCC monitors the court order until the conditions are fulfilled.

Schools can be involved with JCCs in the following ways:

- 1) having school representation on JCCs,
- 2) providing recommendations to JCCs on student cases; and
- 3) assisting with the implementation and monitoring of court orders.

For information on existing JCCs or on the establishment of new JCCs, contact the Family Division at (609) 984-4227.

### ***Youth Services Commissions***

The Youth Services Commissions (YSCs) were established to assess the priorities and needs of the following youth:

- 1) those who are at-risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system;
- 2) those who are involved in the juvenile justice system; and

- 3) those who are at-risk for further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

YSCs develop, implement and contract for community programs for juveniles, as well as review and monitor new and existing programs to determine their effectiveness. YSCs are comprised of family court judges, prosecutors, detention center directors, public defenders, community agency directors and community members who are interested in the juvenile justice system.

Schools can be involved with YSCs in the following ways:

- 1) having school representation on YSCs;
- 2) providing information and recommendations to YSCs on student needs; and
- 3) coordinating programs and services.

For information on YSCs, call (609) 434-4125.

### ***Juvenile Justice Commission***

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is responsible for implementing reform of the juvenile justice system. JJC serves youth through a continuum of services, including prevention, intervention, incarceration, education and aftercare. Since JJC is responsible for administering its services in collaboration with families, communities and government agencies, it is incumbent upon schools to coordinate with JJC, particularly in the planning and delivery of transitional and aftercare services. For information on JJC, call (609) 530-5037.

## **FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**

Two of the primary resources that provide supportive services for the entire family unit are described below.

### ***Family Division of the Superior Court***

The Family Division addresses the needs of families in crisis in the following ways: dispute resolution, custody/visitation mediation, parent education programs, matrimonial early settlement panels, diversionary programs (e.g., crisis intervention units, intake service conferences, Juvenile Conference Committees, offense specific



programs, substance abuse) and juvenile referees. Volunteers are used extensively on Child Placement Review Boards, Juvenile Conference Committees, as supervisors in the Supervised Visitation Program and the Volunteers in Probation Program. Schools should maintain relationships with officials of the Family Division and coordinate services for student cases, where possible. For information on the Family Division, call (609) 984-4228.

### ***DIVISION OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES***

The mission of the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), New Jersey Department of Human Services, is to protect children, support families, ensure permanency for children and prevent violence and disruption. DYFS has a comprehensive system of county-based service providers who carry out this mission under the following principles:

- ❑ Individuals and families possess certain inherent strengths and opportunities that can be drawn upon when problems emerge.
- ❑ Family and community settings provide the best environments for both children and adults.
- ❑ Communities can be most sensitive to the problems that affect families and can be more aware of the solutions that are likely to alleviate them.
- ❑ Services that are individualized, readily accessible, high quality, cost effective, culturally competent, client focused and outcome oriented are most effective in achieving family stabilization and growth.
- ❑ Permanency planning guides all intervention with children and families through timely, systematic actions and decisions that ensure the achievement of a safe, stable and permanent home for a child.
- ❑ If out-of-home placement becomes necessary for a child after reasonable efforts have been made to keep the child safe at home, services toward permanency must start immediately after placement.
- ❑ The majority of children served by DYFS reside in their own families' homes. When a decision is made to provide a child with out-of-home placement, however, DYFS uses the least restrictive setting possible that is appropriate for the treatment needs of the child. Most children placed by DYFS reside in foster care.

To contact the county office for DYFS in your area, refer to the blue pages of the local phone book, or call either (800) 331-3937 or (609) 292-8312. Additional information on related resources can be found in the Action Index in the telephone book for each county under the following heading: "Child and Adolescent Counseling."